

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

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Eisenhower Moves Mystify Allies

By Drew Pearson

American allies have been flabbergasted, to put it mildly, at the spectacle of outgoing President Eisenhower starting policies in Laos and Cuba during the last few days in office which he could not possibly follow up.

In Laos, Ike appeared willing to take the United States up to the brink of a jungle war thousands of miles away which no American military leader wanted to fight, and which the President who succeeds him certainly would hesitate to continue.

In Cuba, the retiring President broke relations with a country whose people have been our friends for over 60 years, yet continued relations with the same Communist countries which were supplying arms to Cuba. He did this despite the quite recent advice of his Secretary of State that the U. S. embassy in Havana must, at all costs, be kept open.

This sudden activity by a President who spent more than three years out of his eight in office either ill or on vacation has not only mystified our allies, but has made them wonder whether Eisenhower



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was deliberately trying to make things difficult for Kennedy. Was he trying to hand Kennedy Eisenhower-made policies which Kennedy would have to carry out? This was asked quite seriously among the diplomats of Western Europe.

Behind Ike's Moves

The answer is threefold:

1. Ike was burned up at Kennedy's campaign insinuations that he was a do-nothing President and had let the U.S.A. deteriorate to the rank of second-class power. To show the opposite, Ike has been determined to leave office a strong, hard-hitting President.

2. Allen Dulles had warned the President last fall that the Communist bloc might take advantage of the vacuum between the election Nov. 8 and the inauguration Jan. 20 to try to catch the United States off balance. So he, Ike, has been determined to demonstrate that he's firmly in the saddle, has a tight grip on the reins.

3. Adm. Harry Felt, U. S. Commander in the Pacific, sent the White House an alarming report claiming that the Communists had invaded Laos and that it could turn into another Korea. This got Ike all steamed up, caused him to alert the 7th Fleet.

In the end, Admiral Felt's alarm appeared unjustified. Only two Communist soldiers

—no troops—were found in Laos. There was a Russian arms drop, but it was insignificant compared with our own. So our British and French allies flatly refused to go along with any scare moves in Southeast Asia until Kennedy took office.

In Latin America, some governments had been veering toward a break with Fidel Castro, but Ike's sudden rupture now makes that difficult. For it's extremely unpopular for any Latin nation to appear to be following the advice and leadership of military-minded Uncle Sam.

And when Ike sent the giant airplane carrier Franklin D. Roosevelt to Guantanamo he made it all the more difficult for even our best friends to follow our lead in breaking relations. There is nothing that boils the Latins more than the spectre of U. S. might hovering over a little Latin nation.

Note—Our allies now figure they have the President of the United States in a calmer mood. But they're still mystified as to why after so many quiet years of putting on safe greens, Ike suddenly began swinging wild into the dangerous rough of foreign affairs.

Words, Not Deeds

One proposal for getting rid of farm surpluses, pounded for years by the National Farmers Union, has been "food for

peace." So it was natural that when the Inaugural Committee conceived the idea of a float featuring "food and peace" they should turn to Minnesota, breadbasket of the west, and Bill Thatcher, head of the Farmers Union Grain Terminal in the Twin Cities.

Mr. Thatcher collects around \$3.5 million yearly from Uncle Sam and the American taxpayers for storing surplus grain. Out of this, Thatcher spends about \$2 million a year for propaganda for higher price supports which have the effect of increasing farm production and, in turn, the farm surplus which he stores. Among other things he signed up two years ago for a 3-year TV "educational" program on a 14-station network.

So the Inaugural Committee suggested that Mr. Thatcher might spare a mere \$2000 to build a "food for peace" float which would illustrate one way of getting rid of the food surplus which Mr. Thatcher helps to store. They thought this would also be educational.

Mr. Thatcher, however, said no.

Note—The American Eagle, standing on a globe representing the world, and holding a giant market basket in its beak, with farmers filling the basket, will still be in the parade, however. The John Deere farm implement company generously offered to pay for the "food for peace" float.

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